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Primary and classical education

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PRIMARY AND CLASSICAL EDUCATION

AN ADDRESS

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BY

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Chairman has informed you that the subject which I am to bring before you to-night is that of education ; I may add, of education considered in its relation to the State. It is a subject of infinite importance. It is the question of the day. It is a matter of great difficulty, and one on which there is great diversity of opinion. I have not come here to seek popularity, I have not come here to say what might be agreeable to the audience ; I have come here to tell you the result of some experience and much reflection on this subject ; and therefore I throw myself on your indulgence, that, in case—as I fear myself it may be—I may say anything that may be displeasing to any part of you, you will think I do it merely in the discharge of what I conceive to be my duty on such an occasion as this, and that you will kindly excuse it, and not take offence at what may be said. I have much to say, and I am anxious not to trespass on your patience ; and, therefore, without further preface, I will address myself to the subject of the evening. The question of education naturally divides itself into two branches—the education of the poor or primary education, and the education of the middle or upper classes. I have a word or two to say of each in their turn.

And, first, I will address myself to that which appears to be of the greater consequence of the two—the education of the poor as far as it is connected with the State. Now, we have had for many years a system of State-aided education ; and I think, without wearying you with what you know very well—the general outlines of that system—that we can infer from what

has been already done, that certain principles are pretty well agreed upon and established among us. I shall not waste time in demonstrating these principles, but merely state them and pass on to the matter which appears to me to be disputable.

I think we may assume that it is now agreed on all hands that the education of the poor is not a matter to be left wholly or entirely to private enterprise, but is a duty of the State. I do not say at this moment to what extent; but after we have now for twenty years been in the habit of giving aid out of the State funds to carrying on these schools, it would be too late for any one to argue that the State had neither duty nor care in the matter.

Then, I think, we are at liberty to infer also that we are agreed that the State represents in the matter of education not the religious but the secular element. The plan of education which is now pursued is to entrust the management of the schools to persons actuated generally by strong religious feelings, and who found the schools for the purposes of some particular sect. Then the State assists them, stipulating in return for a certain amount of secular instruction. The inspectors who go to the school owe a sort of divided allegiance. They are the servants of the State in so far as they ascertain the amount of secular instruction given; and they are the servants of the different denominations in so far as they examine into religious matters. Therefore, it is quite clear that those advance no new doctrine at all, but merely state the present system of education, who say that the State's relation to it is a secular relation, and that its business is with the secular part of popular instruction.

The third principle is, first, that the best way of carrying on education is not either to have a centralised department through which the whole shall be managed, nor is it to leave it wholly to local energy without any interference of the State, as is done in America; but that the best way is to combine the two—a local agency, the best that can be found for the purpose for carrying on the process of education, while reserving to the Government the duty of superintending and testing it—that it is this mixture

of the local and central principle which gives us the best hope of sound education. That is the third principle I venture to speak on as one to be taken for granted.

The fourth principle is that it is the duty of the State, above all things, to test and ascertain the nature of the education given; that it is not right to leave to the persons who give the instruction the power of testing their own work, but that the instruction, having been given by one set of persons, should have its value set on it by another set of persons.

The fifth principle, which I may also take for granted, is this —that when the State gives aid for schools, it ought not to give it merely for the school being in existence, or for having on its books a certain number of scholars or a certain attendance, but that it ought to be given in exchange for a certain amount of efficiency; that the State's business is to ascertain the results of the instruction given, and then to pay in proportion to those results.

These, ladies and gentlemen, are the five principles which I think may be taken as agreed upon and ascertained with regard to education. I shall, therefore, say no more about them, but proceed to where I think the disputable matter begins, and that is where we come to consider what is the precise duty of the State with regard to the communication of instruction.

Of course, there have been a great many different opinions on this subject. For instance, Plato thought so very highly of the duty of the State on this subject, that he went the length of saying that he would not trust any parent with the education of his own child; and in order that the parent might not interfere in the education of his own child, he proposed that no parent should know his own child, and that no child, however wise, should know his own parent. I think we need not go quite as far as that. I do not think it is necessary, in order to educate the people, to do as Plato wanted to do—to destroy the institution of the family, around which all the institutions of this country group and cluster themselves. But I think, in the main, though he may have carried his principle a little too

far, that Plato was right. He regarded the education of youth as the primary duty of the State ; he did not put it as one to be taken up after all other duties were discharged, but he seemed to think it almost superseded all other duties. He seemed to think that if persons are well educated, they will want few laws—they will be laws to themselves ; that if persons are well educated, they will want few police, or little executive government—that they will be able to govern themselves—each man, putting a restraint on his own inordinate desires and passions, will be a law to himself, and will require no external force to keep himself in the path of duty. I do not, perhaps, go quite so far as that, because it must be remembered these things were said of small communities ; but this I will say, that I consider the education of the people to be exactly as much a part of the duty of the State as the making of laws, the administration of the government, the regulation of foreign affairs, the management of the army and navy, as the regulation of the police, or the administration of the judicial functions of government. The question stands exactly on the same ground, and the Government is no more excusable for neglecting that duty than it would be for neglecting the protection of persons or property at home, the maintenance of the national honour abroad, or the making of such laws as were demonstrably necessary for the welfare of the subject. That is the general principle from which I start, and now let us see how far we come up to it. I am sorry to say the existing system falls far short of it, because the existing system in England is that the Government shall certainly admit its duty to educate the people, but shall not occupy a position that enables it to do it. The initiative is not with the Government. We have in truth no Minister of Education. It is only on the motion of private individuals that the Government can aid a school where it is wanted. All it can do is to follow where private enterprise leads it. Where people are good enough to found schools, Government can assist them ; but where they are not, Government can do nothing. The consequence is that money is generally forthcoming in those places where education is most

abundant; and, therefore, Government money is spent in giving assistance where it is least wanted, and withheld where it is most required. That is the cardinal defect of the system, and that is a defect that is not collateral to or extraneous, but inherent in its very nature; because the system being to base education on religious zeal and feeling, necessarily implies a voluntary system, for it is manifest that as you cannot create by Act of Parliament religious feeling and zeal, you can only act where they are to be found, where they are willing to put themselves in motion. Therefore it follows, from the essence of the system, that we must have Government placed in an unworthy position, merely following the will of private persons, obliged to stand looking on with folded arms and see masses of the population of the country growing up in vice and ignorance, while its assistance is lavished on places where there are sufficient resources to found schools and maintain them without Government aid at all. This is a very serious defect. Theoretically, nothing can be more objectionable; but I will confess to you that had it had not been for certain recent occurrences, I should not have been disposed, defective as our system is, to meddle with it, because it is impossible to meddle with, to supplement this system—it is impossible to give assistance to any place where a school does not exist, without impairing, perhaps destroying, the voluntary system on which we rely; since it is manifest, if by withholding their contributions people can get the same thing done from other quarters, we are giving a premium to withhold those contributions, and thus to destroy those voluntary principles on which we trust. And it is not to be denied that this system, though partial, is one of great efficiency, for I believe the instruction communicated in these schools may compare favourably with that of any country in the world. Certainly, when one compares them with America, which is held up to us as a model, the difference is enormous, because in America the State makes a grant for the education to a Society or Township; but that grant is not given with reference to any system of inspection—indeed, inspection is unknown in their schools—and

examination, such as is practised under the Revised Code in England, and as I hope will soon be practised in Scotland, is totally unknown, so that the assistance given to schools is granted there without any test of their efficiency. But this system has in it other recommendations. It is homogeneous with the habits and feelings of the people, particularly in the country districts of these islands ; it enlists in its cause the best local agency that can be found—the gentlemen and clergymen resident in the parish. For these reasons I confess I should have been very unwilling to meddle with it. It has existed some time—it is existing—and to alter it will imply, I have no doubt, a very considerable sacrifice of efficiency, a great dislocation of energy and effort, during which much evil will accrue ; but we have arrived at a time when we should no longer deliberate on these questions.

I am not going to enter on political matters, but we are all aware that the Government of the country, the voice potential in the Government, is placed in the hands of persons in a lower position of life than has hitherto been the case. It is not merely desirable, it is of the utmost importance, it is necessary for the preservation of the institutions of the country, that those people should be able properly and intelligently to discharge the duties devolving on them. Even supposing that the classes now enfranchised possess this knowledge, we require a much better guarantee than we have at present that those who are to come after them will possess it also ; and if, as I fear is the case in many cases, they do not possess the knowledge, we are bound to strain every nerve to give it them. There is no effort we should not make—there is no sacrifice, either of money, or prejudice, or feeling, we should not submit to—rather than allow a generation to grow up in ignorance, in whose hands are reposed the destinies of all of us, the destinies of the nation. Therefore, gentlemen, though I should have been very glad to have allowed the system to have gone on quietly, peacefully, unostentatiously spreading itself, as it has hitherto done, I am firmly of opinion that the time has arrived when it is our duty to vindicate for the State its real function in this matter. Nor is it our duty to make the

State the henchman or follower of private enterprise, but rather the representative of the whole community, having a vital interest in the education of every one of its members. I shall now submit to you what I consider would be a fitting outline of a plan by which this might be accomplished. I cannot do complete justice to it without trenching on politics. It is a thing which must be done, and done immediately. We cannot suffer any large number of our citizens, now that they have obtained the right of influencing the destinies of the country, to remain uneducated. It was a great evil that we did so before—it was an evil and a reproach, a moral stigma upon us. But now it is a question of self-preservation—it is a question of existence, even of the existence of our Constitution, and upon those who shall obstruct or prevent such a measure passing, will rest a responsibility the heaviest that mortal man can possibly lie under. Now, my friend Mr. Bruce had a scheme which, I think, in the circumstances under which he proposed it, was a good one, and which I would have willingly supported—a scheme for permitting persons to tax themselves for the purposes of education. I am sorry to say that in the circumstances in which we are now placed I consider that scheme not nearly drastic enough for what is wanted. Permission can only make a general system, what we want is an universal one. We must go further than permitting—we must compel. We must insist that there shall be some means or other by which education shall completely pervade in this country. We must carry out in some way or other the great work of the Reformers in Scotland when they placed a school in every parish. I am going to show you how I believe, with such experience as I have, this can be effected.

I think the first sacrifice the advocates and friends of the present system must make is that they must give up the denominational system of inspection. I think the State will have to confine itself to the secular part of education; to give up what is at present a sort of joint partnership in inspectors with the different denominations. You will see in a moment why I put this in the front. I think also that the present schools must be

made as efficient as possible for the education of all classes of Her Majesty's subjects; and therefore that the State ought not, for the future, to give sums of public money for the assistance or maintenance of schools unless they have what is called a conscience-clause—that is, unless persons of all denominations are admitted without having anything done that shall violate or infringe upon their religious opinions. These two things being premised, what I would propose is this:—I would say, Commence an educational survey of these islands; do not wait for people to come to you and say they want public money. Commence a survey, and report upon Great Britain parish by parish; report to the Privy Council in London the educational wants in each parish, the number of schools, the number of children, and what is wanted to be done in order to place within the reach of the people of that parish a sufficient amount of education. When that has been done, I think it should be the duty of the Privy Council to give notice to that parish that they should found a school, or whatever may be wanted for the purposes of that parish. If the parish found a school, then it would be the duty of the Privy Council to assist it, and that in the same way as it assists the schools already in existence. I would say, in passing, that I do not think we should disturb the schools already existing, except that they must submit to undenominational inspection, and to a conscience-clause. If the parish does not agree to what is done, then I think there ought to be power vested in the Privy Council, or the Secretary of State, or some other great responsible public officer, to make a compulsory rate on them to found that school. I think the schools they found should be entitled to the same inspection and examination as the schools already in existence, and receive the same grants or results. That simple machinery would, in a short time, alter the whole face of the question, and place education within the reach of every one of Her Majesty's subjects. Then, and not till then, it will be right to talk about compulsory education, because I can imagine nothing more unjust, nothing more unfair upon a child, than to say that a man shall not be allowed to employ the child

because he has never been educated, when the State has not placed within the reach of that child the means of education.

Well, gentlemen, that is the outline of what I have to say on this subject. I am happy to say it resembles in many respects the report of the Commission that has sat on Scotch education—a report which, as far as an Englishman may be permitted to give an opinion, appears to me to be founded on sound principles, and characterised by a great deal of common sense. But I hope that in Scotland no delay will occur in the introduction of the Revised Code. As far as I may judge—and it is a matter about which I know something—this Revised Code would have very beneficial effects in Scotland, which it has not in England. It appears to me one of the faults of the Scotch schools is, that they were rather deficient in school appliances and equipments; that though the masters are of a high class, there is a want, more or less, of assistance in teaching. The masters receive high salaries, but the rest of the school was less abundantly furnished with assistance and teaching appliances in Scotland than in England; and I believe that if the public grant, instead of going as at present in the way of augmentation to the masters, were given to the heritors or managers of the schools, where they are voluntarily established, it would be more beneficially expended than in augmenting the already liberal salaries of masters. I must say, that I cannot agree with the Commissioners in what they say in regard to the children of those in easier circumstances who are sent to those schools. It is very desirable; no one can object to it, that persons in easy circumstances should send their children to the parish schools in Scotland. It is a happy symptom, where such a thing can take place; but I must say, with great deference to the Commissioners, that if people are able to pay for the education of their children they ought to pay, and not take from the public funds. This is a matter on which they lay great stress; but I cannot say we do right in taxing the heritors of the parish indiscriminately for the education of children of rich parents who are able to educate them themselves; and on that point I beg to record my dissent.

One word more on this subject before I quit it. I am not sanguine in the belief that what I wish will be done. Those who are concerned in the present system, and who have taken it up, are actuated by the best motives, and will be most vehement and urgent in resisting any change. The change will trench on their prejudices and feelings, and it is not unreasonable to suppose, without saying anything disrespectful of them, that they will think more of the disturbance of that which has cost them much pain and some money to establish, than they will of the larger public views I have endeavoured to explain to you. But while these people will be warm and earnest, I am afraid the friends of education will be comparatively lukewarm. A man acts with very different energy when he is striving for a particular thing he is connected with than he does when he is merely fighting the battle of the public at large. I will give you an instance of it. In the colony of Victoria, in Australia, recently, the Attorney-General—a gentleman of great influence—introduced a bill for the purpose of providing a national system of education, something of the sort I am describing. You know that there the Legislature is elected by universal suffrage; therefore you would think that the Attorney-General would have received the strong support of the people, because the people were invested with the power of electing the Legislature. As soon as he had broached his scheme—which was more necessary there than here, in consequence of the sparse population of the pastoral part of the country rendering it impossible for more than one school to be erected in a large district—the Roman Catholic bishop entered a formal protest, the bishop of the Church of England entered his protest, all the religious bodies entered their protests, while the people for whose benefit the scheme was designed were silent and apathetic, so that the Attorney-General was obliged to withdraw his bill, and the hopes of a real secular education in that country are postponed. We hear a great deal of the certainty that such a measure will be carried. I do not share in that expectation. I hope most sincerely I shall be disappointed. But whether it be

carried or not, it is the duty of those who have at heart the good of this country and of its institutions, so powerful for good or for evil, to strain every nerve to get it done, or at all events to free themselves from the responsibility of not doing it, and throwing it on those who oppose them.

And now I will pass from this to the second part of my subject, which is, as I told you, the education of the middle and upper classes. And first, I will endeavour to explain to you what I conceive to be the business of education. It seems to me, if one can form an abstract idea of what ought to be taught, that it is to teach a person everything important to know, and, at the same time, to discipline his mind. But as the period during which education can be communicated is very short, we must qualify that view, I think, by saying that the business of education is to teach persons as much of that which it is important they should know as can be taught within a limited time, and with reference to the ordinary faculties of mankind, and that also in so doing care should be taken to discipline the mind of the pupil as far as possible. That is what I conceive to be the object of education. Well, that being so, you see a question arises of very great difficulty—What is it most important that persons should know?—and till we can answer that question, we cannot satisfactorily solve the question which I am now proposing to consider—What is the education that ought to be given to the middle and upper classes of this country? We must invent for ourselves a sort of new science—a science of weights and measures; of ponderation, if I may coin a word—in which we shall put into the scales all the different objects of human knowledge, and decide upon their relative importance. All knowledge is valuable, and there is nothing that it is not worth while to know; but it is a question of relative importance—not of decrying this branch of knowledge, and praising and puffing that—but of taking as far as possible the whole scale of human knowledge, and deciding what should have priority, which should be taught first, and to which our attention should be most urgently directed. That is a problem, you will allow, of most

enormous difficulty. I can only suggest one or two considerations which may assist us in solving it. I think it will be admitted by all who hear me that as we live in a universe of things, and not of words, the knowledge of things is more important to us than the knowledge of words. The first few months and the first few years of a child's existence are employed in learning both, but a great deal more in making itself acquainted with the world than with the knowledge of language. What is the order of Nature? Nature begins with the knowledge of things—then with their names. It is more important to know what a thing is, than what it is called. To take an easy illustration, it is more important to know where the liver is situated, and what are the principles which effect its healthy action, than to know that it is called *jecur* in Latin or ἦπαρ in Greek. I go a little farther. Where there is a question between true and false, it is more important to know what is true than what is false. It is more important to know the history of England than the mythologies of Greece and Rome. I think it more important that we should know those transactions out of which the present state of our political and social relations have arisen, than that we should know all the lives and loves of all the gods and goddesses that are contained in Lempriere's dictionary. And yet, according to my experience—I hope things are better managed now—we used to learn a great deal more about the Pagan than the Christian religion in the schools. The one was put by to Sunday, and dismissed in a very short time; the other was every day's work, and the manner in which it was followed out was by no means agreeable. The slightest slip in the name or history of any of the innumerable children of the genealogy of Jupiter or Mars was followed by a form and degree of punishment which I never remember being bestowed upon any one for any slip in divinity. Then, gentlemen, I venture to think, as we cannot teach people everything, it is more important that we should teach them practical things than speculative things. There must be speculation, and there must be practice, but I think if we cannot do both, we should rather lean to the practical

side. For instance, I think it more important that a man should be able to work out a sum in arithmetic, than that he should be acquainted with all the abstract principles of Aristotle's logic, and that the moods of a syllogism are not so important as the rule of three, practice, and keeping accounts. If we must choose in the matter, we should lean to the practical side. One more rule I will venture to submit—they are four in all—if we must choose in these matters, the present is more important to us than the past. Institutions, communities, kingdoms, countries, with which we are daily brought into contact, are more important than institutions, kingdoms, and countries that have ceased to exist for upwards of 2000 years. I will pursue this topic no farther.

Having made these general observations as my little contribution towards the new science of ponderation or measurement which I am anxious to found, to enable us to compare one branch of knowledge with another, I will proceed, with your permission, to inquire how far the education of the middle and upper classes corresponds with this idea. Without going into detail, I may say the principal subjects of education—I don't say in Scotch Universities, for you are more liberal than we are in England, though even in your universities not quite sufficiently so—in Oxford and Cambridge are analytical mathematics, and what are called the learned languages—viz. Latin and Greek.

Now I admit that mathematics are a most admirable study, and are calculated to train the mind to strict habits of reasoning, and habits of close and sustained attention. But these are the synthetical, not the analytical mathematics. Consider to what this form of study trains a man. It educates him to approach a subject analytically. He takes his conclusion for granted, and then investigates the conditions upon which it rests. Well, that is not a good way of reasoning. The best way of reasoning is to fix upon principles and facts and see what conclusion they give you, and not to begin with a conclusion and see what principles or facts you may be able to pick up in order to support it. Then any one who has gone through this training, knows that you go by steps. One understands step by step, but the

whole very often eludes our grasp, and we find ourselves landed in a conclusion without knowing how. We see each step we have taken, but we see not how we arrived at the conclusion. This is a system in one sense too easy, because each step is easy; and in the other it is too difficult, because it is an immense strain on the mind to grasp the whole effect of what is done. Then you are aware of this also, that perhaps the most useful lesson a man can learn is the estimation of probabilities and sifting of evidence. But this is wholly excluded from mathematics, which deal purely with necessary truth. Therefore, it has often been observed, and by no one more forcibly than your own Sir William Hamilton, that a mind formed upon this kind of study is apt to oscillate between the extreme of credulity and scepticism, and is little trained to take those sensible and practical views of the probabilities and the possibilities affecting our daily life, upon which, far more than upon abstract reasoning, the happiness of mankind depends. I may here mention in illustration what was said by a great judge of men and ability—Napoleon Buonaparte. He took for one of his ministers La Place—one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest of mathematicians, and he said of him—"He was a geometer of the first rank; but whose only idea of transacting the business of his department was with reference to the differential and integral calculus."

Now, I pass on to the other study that is the principal occupation of our youth, and that is the study of the Latin and Greek languages, and the history, science, geography, and mythology connected with them—the principal study being language, and the rest only accessories to it. Now, it strikes one, in the first instance, it is rather a narrow view of education that it should be devoted mainly—I had almost said exclusively—to the acquisition of any language whatever. Language is the vehicle of thought, and when thought and knowledge are present, it is desirable as the means of conveying it. It is not a thing to be substituted for it—it is not its equivalent. It presupposes knowledge of things, and is only useful where that

knowledge is attained for the purpose, namely, of communicating it. I will venture to read a few lines from Pope in illustration of what I say; I should only weaken the thought if I attempted to state the effect of them. They are 140 or 150 years old, and that only shows you how abuses and mistakes may be pointed out in the most vigorous language, and with the most conclusive reasoning, and yet they may remain utterly uncared for :—

> "Since man from beasts by words is known,
> Words are man's province; words we teach alone,
> When reason doubtful, like the Samian letter
> Points him two ways, the narrower is the better.
>
> Placed at the door of learning youth to guide,
> We never suffer it to stand too wide,
> To ask, to guess, to know, as they commence,
> As fancy opens the quick springs of sense,
> We ply the memory, we load the brain,
> Bind rebel wit, and double chain on chain,
> Confine the thought, to exercise the breath,
> And keep them in the pale of words till death."

I think it is a poor and imperfect conception of education that should limit it to the learning of any languages whatever; but surely if we are to make language the whole or a part of education, it should be the language which we are most concerned with; and I must be permitted to say that in my science of ponderation I think English has a prior claim over Latin and Greek. I do not disparage Latin or Greek; but I am speaking of what is most important to be taken first; and I think it is melancholy to consider the ignorance of our own language in which the best educated of our young men are brought up. Latin is, of course, of great use. It is the only means of opening up a great store of information which is locked up in it, and which is not to be found elsewhere. It has a noble literature of its own, and it is the key to most of the modern languages, and therefore it is a study of very great importance. But we must remember that those persons who spoke a language which was the most marked by felicity of expression, and which is the model of all literature—the inhabitants of Greece, I mean—knew no language

but their own. The Romans knew just enough Greek to make them neglect their Latin, and the consequence is their literature is inferior to that of the race that came before them who knew one language. And only see how you set about learning these languages. Learning the language is a joke compared with learning the grammar. The grammar is one thing, and the language another. I agree with the German wit, Heine, who said —"How fortunate the Romans were that they had not to learn the Latin grammar, because if they had done so they never would have had time to conquer the world." Montaigne, 300 years ago, saw this, and pointed it out most forcibly, and by learning the language colloquially, "without a lash, without a tear," he became able to speak it by being talked to in Latin. But that would not answer the purpose. Because it is said "you must discipline the mind," therefore a boy is put through torture of elaborate grammars, which he is forced to learn by heart, and every syllable of which he forgets before he is twenty years of age. There seems something like a worship of inutility in this matter; it seems to be considered very fine to learn something that cannot by possibility do anybody anything of good—

> "The languages, especially the dead—
> The sciences, especially the abstruse—
> The arts, at least all such as could be said
> To be the most remote from common use."

It is an idea that a thing cannot be good discipline for the mind unless it be something that is utterly useless in future life. Now, I do not think so. There is no doubt that Greek is a language of wonderful felicity of expression; but what is more beautiful, more refined, what will exercise taste better than the study of the best modern French prose to be found in M. Prevost Paradol, Sainte Beuve, and other French writers? There is nothing that can approach it in the English language. If a man wishes to exercise himself in these things he cannot possibly have a better subject than French prose. The discipline of the mind is quite as good, and it has this advantage, that when he

goes to Paris he will be able to go to a hotel and make known his wants without becoming a laughing-stock to everybody ; but this would be too useful, and therefore this must be put aside for some discipline in the Greek language, which he is sure to forget before he is thirty. It depends upon what you mean to make men. If you want to make them a race of sophists, poetasters, and schoolmasters, we are going about it in the right way ; but for the business of life we have a little too much Latin and Greek, and if we are to have them taught, they ought to be taught on a very different system. There is nothing more absurd than to attempt to untie knots that have never been tied. If language had been made on a set of general principles—if it had been laid down by the wise men of all nations that the nominative should always agree with the verb, and a verb should always govern the accusative—and language had been made like Euclid—every one of these rules which had been tied we could untie, and a language having been put together in that way we could analyse it into rules. But, gentlemen, language was not so made. Language grew we know not how—like a tree or a plant ; it was not made under general rules, and therefore, when you are trying to form general rules for it, you are sowing the sand—you will never attain to what you want; and the result is that when you come to reflect, you will find that you have wasted much time, and the best years of your life have been made miserable by studying rules, whose exceptions are often as numerous as their illustrations, and of which you never know whether they apply or not.

Well, then, gentlemen, there is another thing I enter my protest against, and that is Latin verses. I do not think the history of poets is so prosperous that the end and object of mankind should be to make as many young people as possible poetasters. One of the least profitable of the little talents that a man can have is that of scribbling verses, and yet years of our lives are taken up in the attempt to teach us to write Latin verses, which, after all, are a mere cento of expressions stolen from different authors, the meaning of which we may not

ourselves know. I know that I have been highly commended for verses I could not construe myself. This of course gives a most unfair predominance to boys who have been early taught how to use a gradus. The knack is so absurd and repulsive that no one ever acquired it late in life. It must be taught early if at all. I have known men of high classical attainments who have not got honours because they have not had the knack of stringing words together, called doing Latin verses. There is a movement going on against the system, and I hope we shall get rid of it. Another absurd thing is this—I think that a man knows a language when he can read with fluency and ease a good plain straightforward author who writes grammatically and sensibly. This may very soon be done in Latin and Greek; but that is not half enough. There is no torture in that—that is very simple. But what you must do is to take a place that is hopelessly corrupt, where the amanuensis has gone to sleep, or has been tipsy, or has dropped a line, or something or other; you must read two or three pages of notes by everybody who has read at these places, written in bad Latin, stating their idea of how they ought to be reformed and translated. If Æschylus came to life again he would be easily plucked in one of his own choruses; and as for Homer, I am quite certain he did not know the difference between the nominative and accusative case; and yet the best hours of our lives are spent in this profitless analysis of works produced by men utterly unconscious of the rules we are endeavouring to draw from them.

Well, gentlemen, I have nothing more to say on that point; but I proceed to another thing which has always struck me very forcibly, and that is the preference that is given to ancient history. Do not misunderstand me. Ancient history is a very important matter, and a very beautiful study; but it is not so important as modern history, and it does not bear nearly so much upon our transactions. Consider what it is. Ancient history has but two phases—the one is a monarchy, the other is a municipality. The notion of a large community existing by virtue of the principle of representation—of a popular

government extended beyond the limits of a single town—is a thing that never entered into the minds of the ancients, so that the best years of our lives are spent in studying history in which that which makes the difference between modern history and ancient—the leading characteristic of our society—that principle of representation which has made it possible in some degree to reconcile the existence of a large country with the existence of a certain amount of freedom—was utterly unknown. The Roman Empire was established, from the necessity of the case, because when Rome became too large to be a municipality, the ancients knew of no other means than to place a Cæsar—a tyrant—over the whole of it, and the idea of sending, as we should do, representatives of the different provinces to meet in Rome, and consult upon the general welfare of the Empire, never occurred to them. That was not known at that time. That was a discovery of many hundred years later. And yet to study all this history, which wants the one thing that is the leading characteristic of modern history, the best time of our life is devoted. I do not say that the time is thrown away, but it is melancholy to reflect that this history is taught, not as an adjunct but as a substitute for modern history. If a man has a knowledge of modern and mediæval history, it is important that he should have this knowledge of ancient history with which he has to compare it; but if he has no modern history he has not the means of comparison. It is useless then by itself. That state of things has utterly passed away. It perished, never to return, with the fall of the Roman Empire, and on its ruins sprung up a new state of things—the feudal system and the polity of the Middle Ages, which ripened into the present state of things. Of all that our youth are taught nothing—they know nothing of it. The subject is never brought before them, and their study is limited and confined to the wars and intrigues of petty republics, the whole mass of which would hardly, perhaps, amount to as many people as are in this great city. There is a well-known passage in a letter by Servius Sulpicius, one of Cicero's friends, in which he endeavours to console him for the death of

his daughter Tullia. This is a translation of it:—"Behind me lay Ægina, before me Megæra, on my right Piræus, on my left Corinth; these cities, once so flourishing, now lie prostrate and demolished before my eyes. I thought, 'Are we little mortals afflicted when one of us perishes, whose life must at any rate be brief, when in one place lie the corpses of so many towns?'" Well, that is one way of looking at the question. I have been in the same place, and also had my thoughts, and I thought how many irretrievable years of my life have I spent in reading and learning the wars, and the intrigues, and the revolutions of these little towns, the whole of which may be taken in at a single glance from the Acropolis of Athens, and would not make a decently-sized English county. I think that reflection must force itself on the mind of any one who has gone to Greece, and has seen the wonderfully small scale on which these republics are laid out, to which the earlier years of his life were almost exclusively devoted.

Then, gentlemen, there is another great fault in this exclusive direction of the mind of youth to antiquity, and that is, that their conception of knowledge wants entirely that which is our leading conception in the present day. I do not think that you will find anywhere in the study of antiquity that which is now in everybody's mouth—the idea of progress. The notion of the ancients was that knowledge was a sort of permanent fixed quantity—that it could not be increased—that it was to be sought for; and if a man wanted to seek for knowledge he did not sit down and interrogate Nature, and study her phenomena, and also analyse and inquire, but he put on his seven-leagued boots and travelled to Egypt or Persia, or as far as he possibly could, in the expectation of finding some wise man there who could tell him all about it. That was the case with Plato, and almost all the great men of antiquity. Now it is no small fault of the modern system of education that it withholds that conception, the key of modern society—that is, not to look at things as stationary, but to look at the human race as, like a glacier, always advancing, always going on from good to better, from better to worse, as the case

may be—an endless change and development that never ceases, although we may not be able to mark it every day. That conception is entirely wanting in the antique world ; and therefore it is not too much to ask that that idea should be imparted to youth before we give so much time to study the state of society in which it is wholly wanting. I won't detain you with any discussion in this place on the morals and metaphysics of the ancients. I suspect that they knew as much of the mental sciences as we do now—neither much more nor much less ; and, without speaking disrespectfully of them, we may say this, that no two of them had the same opinion on the same subject. Then we are dosed with the antiquities of the ancients. Every man is expected to know how many Archons there were at Athens, though he does not know how many Lords of the Treasury there are in London ; he must know all the forms of their courts, though he knows hardly the names of our own. He must be dosed with their laws and institutions—things excessively repulsive to the young mind—things only valuable for comparing with our own institutions, of which he is kept profoundly ignorant.

Then another thing, not a little irritating, is Ancient Geography. A large portion of time is spent in studying divisions of countries that have long ceased to exist, or have any practical bearing on the world. Of course, if you are to study the language of the ancients, these things must be learned ; but is it not melancholy to think how much modern geography is sacrificed to this knowledge ? There is nothing in which young men are more deficient than in geography. I shall just mention a few things within my own knowledge. Take, for instance, Australia. It is very rare to find a person who knows where the colonies of Australia are. The island of Java is said to have been given up by Lord Castlereagh at the Treaty of Vienna to the Dutch because he could not find it in the map, and was ashamed to confess his ignorance. I remember a very eminent member of the House of Commons indeed—I will not mention his name—who made a speech in which it was quite manifest to me that he

thought that Upper Canada was nearest the mouth of the St. Lawrence, and Lower Canada was higher up the river. If I were to tell you his name you would be astonished. Well, we are going to make an expedition to Abyssinia. The whole thing depends upon the nature of the country. Now, what do we know about it. There is a great deal to be known about it. A great many men have travelled there, and a great deal has been written about it? It is as much as most men can do to find it on the map, and very few know a single town in it. I have amused myself trying to see how few men know where Gondar, the capital of this country, is situated on the map; and as the prisoners we are going to attempt to rescue can probably only be reached by going there, and so to Magdala, it is nearly as important to know where it is as to know that Halicarnassus was the capital city of Caria, or that there were twenty-three cities of the Volscians in the Campagna of Rome. There is another illustration I may give. The name of the place is in the Bible, and we might have hoped better things. You will remember that Mr. Bright in last session of Parliament denominated certain gentlemen by a name derived from a cave. Well, I assure you, gentlemen, there was not one person in twenty whom I met who knew anything about the Cave of Adullam, and I was under the melancholy and cruel necessity of explaining it to them, and of pointing the arrow that was aimed against my own breast. After all, gentlemen, education is a preparation for actual life, and I ask you—though no doubt the memory is exercised and the faculties are sharpened by these studies in some degree—whether they really in any degree fulfill that condition. I say there is nothing so valuable for a man as to avoid credulity. If he discounts a man's bill, he should inquire before he does it. But what we are taught by this kind of study, our attention being so much placed upon words, is to take everything for granted. We find a statement in Thucydides, or Cornelius Nepos, who wrote 500 years afterwards, and we never are instructed that the statement of the latter is not quite as good as the former. And so with other things. The study of the dead languages precludes

the inquiring habit of mind which measures probability, which is one of the most important that a man can acquire.

I will now give you a catalogue of things which a highly-educated man—one who may have received the best education at the highest public schools, or at Oxford—may be in total ignorance of. He probably will know nothing of the anatomy of his own body. He will have not the slightest idea of the difference between the arteries and the veins, and he may not know whether the spleen is placed on the right or the left side of his spine. He may have no knowledge of the simplest truths of physics, and would not be able to explain the barometer or thermometer. He knows nothing of the simplest laws of animal or vegetable life. He need not know, he very often does not know, anything about arithmetic, and that ignorance sticks to him through life; he knows nothing of accounts, he does not know the meaning of double entry, or even a common debtor and creditor account. He may write an execrable hand; good clear writing—perhaps the most important qualification a gentleman or man of business can possess—is totally neglected. He may be perfectly deficient in spelling. I knew an eminent person who got a first-class honour, and in his essay—a most excellent English essay—there were forty-six mis-spellings. He may know nothing of the modern geography of his own country; he may know nothing of the history of England. I knew an instance not long ago of a gentleman who had attained high honours at the University, and who became a contributor to a periodical, in which it was suggsted he should illustrate some fact by reference to Lord Melbourne's Ministry. He said he had never heard of Lord Melbourne. He need know nothing whatever of modern history—how the present polity of Europe came into effect. He need know nothing of mediæval history, and that is a matter of serious importance, because important results have flowed from ignorance of that history. Great schisms have arisen in the Church of England from absurdly-exaggerated ideas of the perfection of everything in that dreadful period; and the state of gross ignorance in which people are left as to these times seems

almost to lead them to suppose that the best thing that modern society could aim at would be to return to the state of things which existed when the first crusade was projected. He may be in a state of utter ignorance of the antiquities or the law of England; he knows the laws and antiquities of Greece and Rome. The English laws and antiquities are bound up with our freedom and history, and are important to every day's business; but he knows about them nothing whatever. We have, I here say boldly, a literature unparalleled in the world. Which of our great classical authors is a young man required to read in order to attain the highest honours our educational institutions can give him? He studies in the most minute manner the ancient writings of Rome or Greece. But as for Chaucer and Spenser, or the earlier classics, the old dramatists, or the writers of the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and Charles I., he knows nothing of them; and the consequence is that our style is impoverished, and the noble old language of our forefathers drops out of use, while the minds of our young men are employed instead in stringing together scraps of Latin poets learned by heart, and making them into execrable hexameters. Then as for modern languages.—There is some feeble sort of attempt to teach them, but nothing effective; and yet surely, if English is to have a preference over modern languages, as it ought to have, modern languages ought to have a preference, as far as the practical affairs of life are concerned, over ancient languages. I have been with a party of half-a-dozen first-class Oxford gentlemen on the Continent, and not one spoke a word of French or German; and if the waiter had not been better educated than we, and known some other language than his own, we might all have starved. That is not nearly all, but that is enough. I think you will agree with me that, as Dr. Johnson said of the provisions in the Highland inn, the negative catalogue is very copious, and I therefore sum up what I have to say on this point by making this remark, that our education does not communicate to us knowledge, that it does not communicate to us the means of obtaining knowledge, and that

it does not communicate to us the means of communicating knowledge.

These three capital deficiencies are undoubted; and what makes these so painful is the thought of the enormous quantities of things eminently worth knowing in this world. I have spoken only of modern history, of modern languages; but what are modern history and languages compared with the boundless field that nature opens out—with the new world which chemistry is expanding before us—with the old world that geology has called again into existence—with the wonderful generalisation with regard to plants and animals, and all those noble studies and speculations which are the glory and distinction and life-blood of the time in which we live, and of which our youth remain, almost without exception, totally ignorant? It is not too much to say, that the man who becomes really well educated must begin his education after it has closed. After all had been done for him that the present miserable, contracted, and poor system can do, he has to begin and educate himself over again, with a feeling that he has wasted the best and most precious years of his life on things neither useless nor unprofitable in themselves, but which were the mere bypaths or appanages to the knowledge which constitute the mental stock of a man of erudition. How are we to account for this phenomenon—how, with physical science in the state that it is, with such a history as ours, with such a literature as ours, with such a literature as that of modern Europe before us, we should turn aside from this rich banquet, and content ourselves with gnawing at mouldy crusts of speculations which have passed away upwards of two thousand years? How are we to account for this? It is easily accounted for. It is mainly the fault of educational endowments. When the educational endowments of Universities were made, there really existed no English literature. Modern history had not begun; mediæval history was only to be found in meagre annals of monkish chroniclers. Physical science was not in existence at all; and there really was nothing to direct the mind except Latin and Greek, and Aristotelian logic. No blame, therefore,

attaches to these noble and philanthropic persons who made these foundations. The blame is in those who, after the immense expansion of knowledge, have not found means to expand the objects to which these endowments may apply in a similar proportion. Nor does any blame attach to our Universities, considered strictly as such—meaning by a University a body that ought to examine and test the advancement of its pupils; because our Universities do give examinations, and are willing, I am sure, to give them on any subject on which pupils can be found. But the blame lies with the Government of this country, because these endowments which are now exclusively given to Latin, Greek, and mathematics, are really, in my opinion, public property, for the use of which the State, as representing the public, is responsible. So long as they answer the end that endowments should answer, they should be let alone. When they do not, it is our business to reform them. Now what end do they answer? The end that they answer is this—they give an enormous bounty, an enormous premium, on the study of the dead languages, and of pure mathematics. Well, the studies of the dead languages, and of pure mathematics, are noble and valuable studies, and if that was all I would not object. But you know very well you cannot give a premium to one study without discouraging another, and though their first effect is to give a premium to these studies, their collateral and far more important effect is to discourage, and, I would say, prevent, all those other studies which appear to me infinitely more worthy of a place in education. If a young man has talent, and is in want of money, as any young man is apt to be, and wants to turn his talent to advantage, suppose he devotes himself to physical science in Oxford, he can gain a first-class, whatever good that will do him. But there is hardly an endowment open to him; whereas, if he gave the same trouble to Latin and Greek, he might be a Fellow of half-a-dozen different colleges with the most perfect ease. How can you expect these studies to get fair-play, when they are so handicapped, when the whole weight of these endowments, amounting to about half-a-million annually, is

thrown into the scale of the dead languages, and the study of pure mathematics? The fault lies, therefore with the Government, which has not reformed these endowments; and the remedy, as it appears to me, is that these endowments should be emancipated from this narrow application, so that the emoluments that are to be obtained for learning, may be impartially distributed among all the branches of human knowledge—not proscribing the subjects to which I have alluded, but not giving them these invidious preferences over all the rest. The same thing applies to our public schools. They are really adventure schools, kept by masters for their own profit. There is a foundation which forms the nucleus, and that foundation is generally for the purpose of teaching Latin and Greek, and that overrules and dominates the schools. The remedy is in the hands of parents; but these schools have got a goodwill such as no other institution in the country has got. A man that has been at a school, however badly taught he has been, however much he has been flogged, always goes away with an affection for it. He forgets his troubles. It is a time that appears to us all very pleasant in the retrospect; and as these troubles are to be undergone not again by himself, but by his son, he always sends him there. No doubt, if we could only secure a fair stage and no favour for all the different branches of instruction, the thing would remedy itself. Do not misunderstand me. I do not think it is any part of the duty of Government to prescribe what people should learn, except in the case of the poor, where time is so limited that we must fix upon a few elementary subjects to get anything done at all. I think it is the duty of the parents to fix what their children should learn. But then the State should stand impartial, and not by endowments necessarily force education into these channels, and leave those others dry. And, therefore, what I would press is, that somehow or other the endowments should be so recast as to give all subjects —physical science, modern history, English history, English law, ancient languages, ancient literature, ancient history, ancient philosophy all a fair and equal start. You will say, How is it possible for this to be done? I don't presume to say

what is the best way of doing it, but I can tell you one way it can be done, because I have done it myself. I was Secretary to the India Board at the time when the writerships were thrown open to public competition. We had of course the problem to solve then, because if we had restricted them to Latin and Greek, of course we should have excluded a great number of very meritorious candidates—gentlemen, for instance, coming from the Scotch Universities, who, though very well versed in the philosophy of mind, and many other valuable studies, would not have been able to compete perhaps successfully in classics with boys trained in the English public schools. And therefore we had to attempt to do something of the kind that I have endeavoured to point out to you as being necessary to do. In order to solve the problem of education, I, with the assistance of Lord Macaulay and other eminent men, prepared a scale which has since, with very little change, been the scale upon which these offices have been distributed; that is, we took everything that we could think of that a well-educated man could learn. We took all the languages: we took Latin and Greek, we took French and English, and all the modern languages of Europe; we took the principal branches of physical science, we took history, English Literature, philosophy of mind as taught in Scotland, and at Oxford, and at other places; we took everything, and we gave marks to each according to their relative importance, as near as we could arrive to it; and under that system all persons have been admitted equally and fairly to the benefits of those offices, whatever their line of study may have been. Instead of loading the dice in favour of the dead languages, we gave them all a fair start, and the thing, so far as I know, has worked perfectly smoothly and with perfect success. Now, I say something of that kind should be done if we are to reform endowments so as to place all studies on a level, and then let the best study win. I won't pretend to influence the decision of parents, but I should give to them no bribe, no inducement, to choose one study more than another. but allow them to take whatever they like best. And I think you would find

that the public appetite for Latin verses, the difficult parts of Greek choruses, and the abstruser rules of grammar, such as are given in the Latin Primer recently issued for the use of public schools, would begin to abate ; and the people would think it is better to know something of the world around them, something about the history of their own country, something about their own bodies and their own souls, than it is to devote themselves entirely to the study of the literature of the republics of Greece and Rome.

Well, gentlemen, I am afraid I have detained you at very great length, and you will be happy to hear that I have come to an end to what I propose to say to you. There is one more proposal that I wish to make. I have said I am most anxious to educate the lower classes of this country, in order to qualify them for the power that has passed, and perhaps will pass in a still greater degree, into their hands. I am also anxious to educate, in a manner very different from the present, the higher classes of this country, and also for a political reason. The time has gone past evidently when the higher classes can hope by any indirect influence, either of property or coercion of any kind, to direct the course of public affairs. Power has passed out of their hands, and what they do must be done by the influence of superior education and superior cultivation ; by the influence of mind over mind—"the sign and signet of the Almighty to command," which never fails being recognised wherever it is truly tested. Well, then, gentlemen, how is this likely to be done? Is it by confining the attention of the sons of the wealthier classes of the country to the history of these old languages and those Pagan republics, of which working men never heard, with which they are never brought in contact in any of their affairs, and of which, from the necessity of the case, they know nothing? Is it not better that gentlemen should know the things which the working men know, only know them infinitely better in their principles and in their details, so that they may be able, in their intercourse and their commerce with them, to assert the superiority over them which greater intelligence and leisure is

sure to give, and to conquer back by means of a wider and mor
enlightened cultivation some of the influence which they hav
lost by political change? I confess, for myself, that, whenever
talk with an intelligent workman, so far from being able t
assert any such superiority, I am always tormented with th
conception, "What a fool the man must think me when he find
me, upon whose education thousands of pounds have been spent
utterly ignorant of the matters which experience teaches him
and which he naturally thinks every educated man ought t
know." I think this ought easily to be managed. The lowe
classes ought to be educated to discharge the duties cast upo
them. They should also be educated that they may appreciat
and defer to a higher cultivation when they meet it; and th
higher classes ought to be educated in a very different manne
in order that they may exhibit to the lower classes that highe
education to which, if it were shown to them, they would bo
down and defer.

THE END.

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